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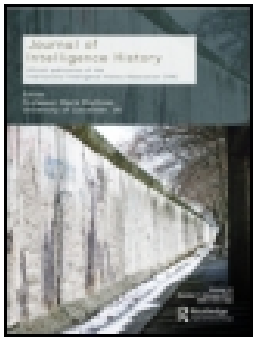
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A gender history of Hungarian intelligence services during the Cold War

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ABSTRACT

Based on the examination of the positions and activities of women employees from the interwar period until the 1980s in the accessible archival sources of Hungarian intelligence services, this paper claims that since in intelligence women employees have been deployed as “controlling images” of men. It argues that for women, the intelligence service sector is just like any other paid employment: with time, women were gradually integrated in it; and the level of their involvement reflected the level of women’s emancipation in the given society. Women working for the intelligence services had to counter workplace discrimination just like any other female employee in more ordinary jobs. However, intelligence work has an additional special feature: sexism and gender-based discrimination are intrinsic parts of it, because the deployment of femininity as “Otherness” is part and parcel of the trade and the result of deliberate methodological decisions.

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‘Das Nachrichtendienst ist ein Herrendienst’ – supposedly this bon mot comes from the legendary chief of the Abwehr, the Third Reich’s military intelligence service, Admiral Wilhelm Canaris (1887–1945) ‘Intelligence is inherently a noble service’ or ‘Intelligence is gentlemen’s service’ which first conceals that intelligence is men’s profession, the second that it is a profession; not a service, and hence essentially hierarchical. In sum, intelligence is defined as service and not as a profession of select elite men, who are aware of what it means to be chosen, and who offer special services to the state not necessarily for a fee. There are particular challenges when one would like to answer to the traditional question raised by gender history namely ‘where were the women’ in case of the intelligence services. Not only are archival sources difficult to access as it is often the case with documents of intelligence services, but the framework in which women are being discussed there as agents, field officers or subjects of intelligence gathering, if discussed at all, requires special theoretical considerations. The list of challenges do not end there. Analyzing women in intelligence services in a country of the Soviet Block,

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namely Hungary, which seemingly promoted women's emancipation at that time also poses special theoretical and methodological challenges.

In what follows, first I will analyze theoretical issue of gendering the history of intelligence gathering with introducing the concept of 'controlling images'. Second after an overview of the available archival sources about gendering history of Hungarian intelligence services (civil and military), I will map how in Hungary the profession institutionally integrated women as employees: agents and officers, in national and international as well as military data acquisition and as subjects of data gathering based on the gender politics of the training manuals. In the conclusion, argue that we can gain otherwise unobtainable insights from a gender sensitive analysis of intelligence work during Cold War.

Theoretical framework: 'controlling images'

The term *controlling image* was developed by Patricia Hill Collins and refers to an image that naturalizes and normalizes sexism and posits it as an unavoidable part of everyday life.¹ The first woman that everyone thinks of when women intelligence agents are mentioned is Mata Hari. Her figure can be interpreted as the classic 'controlling image' of modern day women intelligence agents. These 'controlling images', and among them the sexualized, exoticized image of Mata Hari as the traitor spy woman determine the way we think of women working for the intelligence corps. Hers was the image of the somewhat loose, frivolous woman, whose peculiarities justified her exclusion from the intelligence services. A researcher of the topic, Rosie White argues that Mata Hari's trial – who has been recently rehabilitated – served an entirely different social purpose. White holds that the trial was an attempt to fix Mata Hari's disturbing mobility within the normative system of sexual and imperial relations. With the end of the First World War the norms of femininity and masculinity had to be redefined and the type of femininity represented by Mata Hari had no further purchase: her independence as well as the fact that she had historical agency had to be retaliated in order to reinstate the traditional patriarchal rule.²

The *controlling images* constructed of women working for intelligence services gradually boiled down in the literature to three stereotypes as number of women increased in intelligence gathering: the lustful, wanton dancer; the self-sacrificing, noble spirited woman patriot; and the woman who seeks revenge for the death of a loved one or for lost property.

During the Cold War's technological rivalry, Soviet intelligence deployed women to acquire information from men with secret technological expertise.³ The often used concept of 'honey trap' speaks volumes about our modern-day expectations towards gender roles in intelligence gathering. It was at this moment that the 'controlling image' of the 'good looking Soviet woman agent' became associated with sexual espionage.

¹Patricia Hill Collins, "Mammies, Matriarchs, and other Controlling Images", *Black Feminist Thought? Knowledge, Consciousness, and the Politics of Empowerment* (New York, Hyman, 1990), 67–75.

²Rosie White, "'You'll Be the Death of Me': Mata Hari and the Myth of the Femme Fatale", *The Femme Fatale: Images, Histories, Contexts*. Helen Hanson and Catherine O'Rave eds., (New York, London, Palgrave Macmillan, 2010). 74.

³Open Society Archives (Further OSA) holds a box from Radio Free Europe Archive HU-OSA 300–40-1 with newspaper clippings about deconspired agents.

According to a monograph devoted to the topic, Soviet intelligence services gathered compromising information through for instance placing fake nipples on honey trap women, with microphones attached to wearable batteries charged using body heat. Whatever the microphone picked up was transmitted to the interceptors over the walls, where it got recorded, since no one expected the women spies to be able to retain the information even.⁴ Certainly these stories contributed to the further strengthening of the image of the ‘good looking Soviet woman spy’. According to this image these women are pretty, and their bodies are potential sources of danger, but they themselves are incapable of analyzing data, in other words: they are not real professionals even in a country officially supporting women’s emancipation.

Cold War dichotomy is also reflected in how ‘controlling images’ were used in the two major intelligence services. Another ‘controlling image’ relates to the family members of male intelligence agents: the wives and children are handy informants. American women spies were also expected to be the embodiments of traditional femininity as opposed to a communist subversion of gender roles.⁵ While in the public discourse the Soviet women spies were presented either as sexualized *femme fatales* or as merciless, soulless devices of the system, the American women spies were depicted as good mothers and wives who dutifully returned to the homestead after having saved the nation. Further, sexuality was part of the job and the service, and ‘honey traps’ were used both for blackmailing and for data collection. The framework of sexuality in this context was not necessarily heteronormative.⁶

As I argued in this section women are present in intelligence work as ‘controlling images’. Intelligence work has an additional special feature to any other profession: sexism and gender-based discrimination are constitutive parts of it which makes the gendered analysis challenging. The deployment of femininity as ‘Otherness’ is part and parcel of the trade itself and the result of deliberate decisions of obtaining information. Intelligence work is a complex, structured process, within which the directing, supporting, and executive functions require different skills and expertise. Therefore, the hierarchy within the profession and the possibility of progress are determined by gender hierarchies, thereby making sexism and gender-based discrimination intrinsic parts of intelligence gathering process on all levels.

Context: history and sources of gendering Hungarian intelligence services

The history of intelligence is usually analyzed in a framework of institutional history, which all too often conceals the generic features of intelligence work discussed in the first section. In this section I give an overview of the history of Hungarian intelligence services and how this history determines the accessibility of its archives today.

As a successor state after the collapse of Austro-Hungarian Monarchy in 1918, the Hungarian secret services were organized under the Ministry of Interior and the Ministry

⁴David Lewis, *Sexspionage. The Exploitation of Sex by Soviet Intelligence* (New York, Heinrich Hanau Publications, 1976).

⁵Veronica Anna Wilson, *Red Masquerade: Gender and Political Subversion During Cold War, 1945–1963* (PhD Dissertation, Rutgers University, 2003).

⁶Hungarian intelligence services were using homosexuality in the process assigning informants Állambiztonsági Szolgálatok Történeti Levéltára (State Security Historical Archives) (further ÁSZTL) 1.11. 2. series. 53. box 1981–82, 1982–83, 1983–84, 54. box 1984, 1985, 1986.

of Defense: the sections focusing on military intelligence and counter intelligence. This structure existed till 1945. Their archival material were archived by the Ministry of Interior and the Ministry of Defense which were heavily damaged by the war and now gives only a glimpse of the work executed there.

The files of those agents or field officers who were reemployed after 1945 are available in the State Security Historical Archive (Állambiztonsági Szolgálatok Történeti Levéltára: ÁSZTL) which hosts all, partly accessible material related to military and civil intelligence and to counter intelligence. The newly organized, communist controlled State Security Department of the Ministry of Interior was staffed with Soviet advisors, and it provided also special services for the Military Political Directorate of the Ministry of Defense acting as Military Secret Service. The former agents and officers or the former handlers if decided to stay in Hungary, they tried to continue their services collaborating with the new communist regime after 1945. The State Protection Authority (renamed in 1947) acted as an independent ministry till 1953. After 1956 revolution the intelligence services were reorganized and from 1962 the 3rd department of the Ministry of Interior was working on intelligence and counterintelligence divided by 4 subsections including one on military intelligence till 1989.⁷

When I started the research this article I interviewed colleagues working on history of intelligence ensured me that there is not much accessible material about the topic. It is true that nobody so far has researched the history of intelligence from a gender perspective but with a reason. Those who wanted to convince me that this topic is not worth researching were partly correct as the material I was given by the reference archivist is sporadic but surprisingly insightful to understand gender bias of intelligence work.

I will examine the gendered aspects of intelligence work analyzing all files available for research in the Military Archive and the State Security Historical Archive (ÁSZTL) in Budapest.

The processes determining the situation of Hungarian research and the accessibility of sources have been widely discussed.⁸ The early documents of security/intelligence services were destroyed during WWII and the documents of the pre-1989 period is still difficult to access.⁹ The Open Society Archive has an extensive press collection about cases covered in the national and international press.

However, the picture that the accessible archival files provide is haphazard. This is partly because we can only know about the cases that made it into the media as the finest professional details were never recorded on file. So, it may occur that the researcher from the vantage point of her current knowledge projects an interpretation onto a story, which in its own time was meant to be a smoke screen. Thus, the conclusions we may draw out of singular cases are only suitable for outlining tendencies.

The successful informants are those we don't know about. The national and international press coverage of mostly failed intelligence operations can be found in the Open

⁷Summary is based on Felderítő Szemle (Intelligence Review) Vol 17. No. 2. 2018 <http://www.knbsz.gov.hu/hu/letoltes/fsz/2018-2.pdf> (Accessed August 1, 2019) and Jagadics Péter, Rajos Sándor, Simon László, Szabó Károly: *A magyar katonai elhárítás története 1918–2018*, (History of Hungarian military counter intelligence) KNBSZ/Metropolis Media, Budapest, 2018.

⁸See more "Main focus: The Secret Police Files of the Former Communist Countries," *Südosteuropa Mitteilungen* Vol. 5–6. (2011): 69–72.

⁹The terminology used in this article is about security services as military and civic intelligence services were united under the concept of security service.

Society Archive (OSA) Budapest, in the Radio Free Europe clipping collection. It is not a coincidence that among the Open Society Archives' press material about detected agents of the Hungarian intelligence services there are many women. They held the lowest positions and at the same time performed the riskiest work: the transfer of data from one place to the other.¹⁰

The main sources of this paper are from the ÁSZTL. Doing research in ÁSZTL means that the researcher is assigned a reference archivists who is preparing the archival material after consultation with the researcher as no openly accessible catalogue of the collection is available. The personal chemistry between the archivist and the researcher fundamentally influences the research outcome. I was given files with female agents and handlers which have been read by other researchers before, so they have been previously screened together with training manuals, statistical report about women in the Hungarian intelligence services and recruitment files. What follows is the analysis of these documents after discussing the methodological challenges.

Methodological challenges

In this paper based on documents available about Hungarian intelligence gathering I am arguing for are three methodological problems of gender analysis of history of secret services.

First is that historians invest serious effort into reconstructing the way intelligence worked in particular cases. Each case was unique and it is difficult to generalize. This approach becomes even more problematic if we take the gender of information in consideration. For instance, what determines the relationship of a male liaison officer and a woman agent (or very rarely a female liaison officer and a male agent), or what determines whether an agent was described as pretty, attractive, representative or ready for sexual encounters, cannot be deduced from the files. There are no written documents to rely on. Rather, it is only the informal conversations of the decision-making men within intelligence that offer a starting point. Intelligence services replicate the values of the society they are embedded in and operate via their reflection and exploitation. Therefore, it is difficult to analyze the intelligence work of the Cold War because the system of genders was very different then not to speak about the official gender regime of the communist states. That is why the in-depth knowledge of the inner logics and value systems of Cold War institutions is indispensable for this research; without it the files in which women appear could remain invisible forever.

The next challenge is posited by the amount of information. 'To know everything about everything' is what a July 1969 report states as the goal of Hungarian intelligence services.¹¹ This universalized approach to intelligence work posits a methodological issue for the researcher. As I pointed out in the previous section only a fragment of the information survived, and whatever survived is not necessarily accessible for research. Even if it was accessible for research it most probably would not be sufficient for reconstructing a case, because although the information is available, the decisions that were made based on the

¹⁰OSA HU-OSA-300-40-1, in 135.10 the case of Erika Ossendriver and in 135.101. the case of Hingyi Henriette.

¹¹OSA HU-OSA 300-40-4. Box 5. 1878/69 report.

information are not. In other words, the picture that could be pieced together by the chosen few from many different files is beyond the researcher's reach.

The third challenge is that 'cognitive closure' which occurs when the brain receives new information that is in discord with information received earlier, and as a result it cannot process both. This phenomenon entails behavior as well, which is shaped by tradition and previously acquired knowledge.¹² For example, intelligence work is 'Herrendienst', and in this framework everything that relates to women but does not signify them as the dichotomous 'Other' is unprocessed. This 'cognitive closure' explains the lack of research and the unchangeable character of repeating 'controlling images' instead of analyzing how they were constructed and what purpose they play. The law regulating scientific research protects sensitive data, for example information about sexual orientation cannot be disclosed for the researcher. Therefore, the researcher cannot trace how the object of her research, in other words, how sexuality was defined, deployed, manipulated, not even in those documents that she has access to. Only anonymized files can be accessed, the rest will be available only beyond the term of protection determined by law, that is, thirty years after the death of the subject; or if the date of death is unknown, then ninety years after the date of birth. Therefore, paradoxically it is exactly the secrets of the intelligence services that protect them even today from the disclosure of data about their operation. Thus, 'cognitive closure' itself comes to a closure: women were not only unrecognized actors, but even today it is impossible to write about their stories, exploitation, manipulation – in protection of their privacy rights.

Recruiting women employed by Hungarian intelligence services till 1945

The process how women became paid employees of intelligence services is connected to conceptualizing women as 'controlling images'. No matter that the character of intelligence work has changed due to technical developments, the staff employed there followed the same gendered principles.

The First World War brought along major changes in the history of European intelligence services. For the first time there was such a mass need for information that it transformed the profession and structure of intelligence. Until then, the intelligence services sector only recruited from a pool of men working for the military or for diplomatic services, all from prestigious families and with the appropriate financial background. Analyzing the foundation of the British, the Belgian and the French intelligence services, Tammy M. Proctor showed that recruitment primarily happened through family connections.¹³

Family relations played an important role later as well, since the family members of these men often got involved in intelligence work themselves. Furthermore, those few women with elite education who were recruited for their own expertise – and not as someone's relatives – were also from known and trustworthy families. Not only was loyalty towards the family seen as a prerequisite of loyalty towards the homeland; but also, those men who established the foundations of professional intelligence work – most

¹²Constant Willem Hijzen, „The Perpetual Adversary. How Dutch Security Services Perceived Communism (1918–1989)”, *Historical Social Research* Vol. 38, No. 1 (2013):171.

¹³Tammy M. Proctor, „Family Ties in the Making of Modern Intelligence,” *Journal of Social History* 2005 (Winter): 451–466. Stella Rimington was assigned to MI5 also this way see Stella Rimington: *Open Secret* (London, Hutchinson, 2002).

of them with backgrounds in the colonial army – considered that through family ties they could keep these otherwise unreliable and emotion-driven women under control.

These early years made a lasting, perhaps still lingering effect on the way the women workforce has been recruited by the intelligence services. In the services' internal patriarchal order women were defined as assistant workers, controllable and to be controlled through emotional connection. Additionally, there were of course women who were considered 'usable' as 'spy courtesans', but as no respectable woman would have ever taken these tasks, those conducting it were symbolically placed outside of the existing patriarchal order as 'the Others.'

The First World War the previous unwritten rules of recruitment to 'Herrendienst'. During the First World War, gathering information from behind enemy lines, for instance the oversight of railroad traffic, was only possible via personal presence. The securing of communication and the processing, archiving, and evaluation of incoming data was done by women too, chiefly because the male work force was simply lacking. After 1919, as men returned from the battlefields, most women working for the intelligence services were dismissed.¹⁴

We also have information about the recruitment practices of the Gestapo before 1945. Hitler considered that the intelligence sector should primarily employ women, 'especially blasé high-bred women hungry for adventure, seeking thrills'.¹⁵ Based on this we can conclude that women who joined the intelligence sector did so partly to acquire a measure of agency in a male dominated world, but the quote also illustrates the profession's elitism. For women suffocated by a middle class existence or feeling trapped in the closed confines of social space, the mystery of intelligence work was presumed to be attractive.

Aside from their family connections and social standing, women's involvement in intelligence services was determined by another factor: their looks. During the Second World War the American airmail censor station on the island of Bermuda had exclusively women employees, and the recruitment requirements were fluency in a European language and nice ankles.¹⁶ In her memoirs the first female head of MI5, Stella Rimington also mentioned nice legs as a selection criteria of MI5 – while men had to have the invaluable skill of being capable to take notes on their handcuffs while horse riding. Stella Rimington herself was recruited as the university educated, bored, destined-for-more wife of a trustworthy clerk in the foreign affairs.

About the Hungarian intelligence services' recruitment pools we can learn directly from the notes of István Újszászy (1894–1948), the former chief of intelligence. The notes were made while he was held captive by the ÁVH (the Hungarian State Protection Authority), therefore their source value is dubious.¹⁷ The lists put together by the former chief of intelligence show that most of the recruited women were either typists or actresses, whose specific skills and greater social connections could be used in information acquisition. The second largest group comprised of the wives of aristocrats and statesmen, who had access to embassies or had an international nexus. The third group

¹⁴Proctor, *Family Ties*, 462.

¹⁵Jacques Delarue, *A Gestapo története* (Budapest, Kossuth, 1972), 198.

¹⁶Quoted in Christopher Lee Phillips, "How Bermuda's 'Censorettes' Made a Nest of Spies Disappear," *World War II* January (2004): 20.

¹⁷*Vallomások a holtak házából. Újszászy István vezérőrnagynak, a 2. vkf. Osztály és az Államvédelmi Központ vezetőjének az ÁVH fogságában írott feljegyzései.* szerk. Haraszti György. (Budapest, Corvina, 2007).

consisted of women who owned or managed popular meeting places where information was exchanged or where targeted men could be compromised.

The entire process of intelligence work (recruitment and deployment) takes place in a gendered space. The following cases are typical of the working of Hungarian intelligence services in the Second World War.

The first type of recruitment is of an atypical Jewish expert spy. Mrs. Szánthó, a Jewish mine owner from Egeres (Aghireş, Kolozs county), whose mine was taken away 'with well-known Romanian methods' had only the Hungarian authorities to turn to for remedy. Therefore, while she was traveling around Transylvania, she regularly reported in letters to Elemér Gyárfás (1884–1945), the president of the Hungarian People's Community of Romania (Romániai Magyar Népközösség), although no document proves that Mrs. Szánthó was assigned the task of traveling and reporting. Once Mrs. Szánthó reported that on the train she got in a conversation with a young German engineer who was traveling to Ploeşti, where a German gasoline factory was to be built. Elemér Gyárfás later integrated this information into the back-up material prepared for the meeting of the Romanian and the Hungarian ministers of foreign affairs, with an attached comment according to which Mrs. Szánthó should be treated carefully because of her 'family interests, Jewish relations and subjective emotions'. Despite these precautionary measures on Gyárfás' side, the information about the increased German industrial expansion in Romania had already appeared as a fact in a letter that was later sent to Budapest. In other words, the conversation in the railroad compartment may have affected the Hungarian side's position in high-level state negotiations.¹⁸ Of course, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs was certainly not solely relying on Mrs. Szánthó's report when establishing the Hungarian strategy. It is important to remember though that neither the number of 'Mrs. Szánthós' working for Hungarian intelligence services, nor the way the various information made its way to the decision makers can be reconstructed today, because the materials of the General Staff are not publicly accessible.

A different type of a recruited woman is exemplified by Mrs. Arz, born Vilma Jakabffy. Although her father was a Supreme Court Judge, she ran a dance school, and fit perfectly the type of a desired woman spy described by Hitler. She belonged to the ethnic Hungarian minority in Romania, which provided both the opportunity and the financial constraint to collaborate with Hungarian intelligence services. In Transylvania, she recruited a Romanian lieutenant, who fell in love with her, later she married an Austrian officer. When the Romanian authorities arrested her in 1936, she escaped to Hungary with the help of the Hungarian consul László Bárdossy but was soon sent back with a new task in 1940. From that time on she ran a pub in Oradea. Her daughter, also a dancer, married an American lieutenant in 1949. From a not very benevolent report about Mrs. Arz we can gather what features were seen to make a woman suitable for working in the intelligence services: 'She is proud of her noble ancestry [...] adores money. She wouldn't think twice to sell the corpse of her mother and her homeland. For her espionage is a business. She had previous experiences with similar activities in Romania [...] a loose-moraled woman prone to dirty negotiations, and though elderly, still lecherous. Very selfish, terribly lazy, she hates to work. She is not without talent in her profession though, as she is a creative, witty, sharp person who understands and loves

¹⁸Hadtörténeti Levéltár (Military Archive), 38/A VII. 125 Gyárfás Elemér, Personalia, 55.

music. She is superstitious, religious; she is a fortune teller, a mystique.’¹⁹ In 1952 the Hungarian services wanted to recruit her once again, and in exchange they promised her that her Budapest-based dance school might remain open. She did not comply, so she was interned until 1953. No more information is available on her. Whether she took tasks which involved sexual encounters and if so, why, is unknown, as there are no sources available.

The third type is contradicting to the popular image that all female spies should have great bodily features. When Elena Endrődy (codenamed PE-2) was approached by the Hungarian intelligence services in 1949, because of ‘material reasons and adventurousness’²⁰ she did not reject them. As a colorful and not unproblematic personality – for instance she was fond of alcohol and for a while she was a morphinist –, her file is thick. Coming from a circus artist family she was a well-traveled polyglot. Her husband, with whom she had a daughter, was the military attaché of the Chinese Embassy in Rome in 1944. According to the available sources, when PE-2 was recruited, her daughter lived in Milan. Although she was ‘barely if at all familiar with the fundamental principles of Marxist-Leninist ideology’, the Hungarian intelligence services still enrolled her because ‘she was naturally sharp witted and an excellent observer’. In addition, she spoke Italian fluently among other languages, which is why in 1949 the intelligence services installed her by an Italian man whom they suspected to have connections with the Italian intelligence services. Her task was to escort the Italian who dutifully took pictures of Hungarian military objects. Elena herself was also under surveillance, as is apparent from a report attached to her file which recorded her disappearance with the Italian in some bushes in the middle of a military observation. Elena had already proven her capabilities once before when she reported on Italian youth visiting the World Festival of Youth and Students in Budapest also in 1949. Hence, after her encounter with the Italian she was rapidly trained for foreign deployment. Her personalized training consisted of the study of the task and the enemy, counter espionage practices, learning to forge connections, secret writing (with lemon juice), practicing her cover identity, and a final briefing.²¹

PE-2 did not comply with the ‘controlling image’ of ‘sex-spying’: she was short, smoked 40 cigarettes a day, one of her arms was crippled because of a gunshot from a former lover, and at the time of her recruitment she was already approaching old age. According to her self-portrait – which every enrolled person had to submit – she had severe attachment problems but wanted to appear self-confident: ‘I like being courted, I especially like making a fool out of them, this is how I protect myself. As soon as I notice that they start to take it seriously, I get bored. If I somehow happen to fall in love, he would never know it, because by the time he’d found out I would have cut ties with him.’²² On the summer of 1949 Elena went to Vienna. There is a thick file of correspondence available until 3 May 1950 when her liaison officer suggested cutting ties with her. His reasoning was that ‘she did not complete her task’, in other words, she did not provide any valuable information, though she kept on mooching the Hungarian authorities for money. Also, drunk in Vienna pubs and restaurants she revealed that she was

¹⁹ ÁSZTL Report V-27 October 6472, 1952, 13.

²⁰ ÁSZTL K-558. Endrődy Elena 7. Report on 8 September 1949.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 8.

²² *Ibid.*, 11.

a Hungarian agent, and one night, drunk again, she threw stones on the local Hungarian Embassy, shouting that they should let her in because she wants to report immediately.²³ It is unclear whether PE-2 became an agent because this was her only way to obtain a Hungarian passport to replace her expiring Chinese one, and to visit her daughter using state money, or whether she was already recruited by other services before the Second World War. We have one more document though: her file was re-opened on 11 April 1967 when a Hungarian soldier stationed in the vicinity of the Yugoslavian border promised her in a letter that he would help her leave the country through Yugoslavia.²⁴ Her colorful story illustrates the career course of the intelligence services before it changed its character to a mass industrial enterprise.

The three cases illustrate another methodological challenge of gendering intelligence: the interesting and colorful cases can always bring only a glimpse on the events which are difficult not only to generalize but due to lack of other sources even to verify. We know about the three cases as they represent a transition from pre-1945 hiring methods to post 1945 period which party changed the rule of the game.

Hungarian intelligence services and its employed women by after 1945

Two interconnected trends had a significant effect on the role women played in intelligence: the post-1945 change of the political elite in Eastern Europe, and, due to the support of the new egalitarian ideology the growing presence of women on the job market. Both Újszászy's list and the three earlier analyzed examples demonstrate the joint presence of continuity and change in Hungarian intelligence after 1945. Furthermore, files from the State Security Historical Archives (ÁSZTL) show that during the establishment of the new intelligence services, the State Security Services reached out (or rather back) for agents who – according to the General Staff's documentation – had been successful before.

The change of elites was accompanied by the transformation of the intelligence services. The 'Herrendienst's staff completely transformed, which also entailed the democratization of the profession in a particular sense. Many of the women whom they previously employed – aristocrats, wives of politicians – either left the country or became the potential targets of recruitment abroad, or they became targets, or sometimes even paid agents of the reformed Hungarian secret police.

From 1945 onward, more and more women became part of the intelligence services from employees and informants to technical personnel and trainers. Still, sexism, or gender based negative discrimination was and remained a core element of intelligence work. We can even say that the effectiveness of intelligence work at the time was dependent on the practical effectiveness of sexism. Intelligence work was bound by its own strict rules and regulations, and in a way the intelligence corps was above the government. At the same time the rules concerning women were not fixed, and as I will argue later, because the 'woman' was perceived as the 'Other', she became subjected to increasingly boundless and uncontrolled, direct and indirect power, shaped by the values and stereotypes of decision-making men.

²³Ibid., 45–46.

²⁴Ibid., 56.

Since the Second World War the technique and technology of information acquisition underwent fundamental changes. While at the beginning of the 20th century personal presence and the transfer of information was significantly challenging, with today's technologies, information acquisition does not necessitate personal presence; it may be done in front of the computer as a 9 to 5 office job. Similarly, while during the Cold War the Bulgarian truck drivers detected military objects as they drove their loaded trucks on Western European highways, today's satellites can transfer a detailed and reliable image of a palm-sized territory to any part of the globe, the analysis of which is done as a regular white collar job. In addition, before the invention of the internet, the writing of secret messages with hidden ink and their delivery was among the hardest of tasks, while today anyone with the right set of skills can send an email from an encrypted address.

The Hungarian intelligence services, just like any other intelligence service, strictly and hierarchically divided all tasks, primarily in order to protect the anonymity of participants. At the same time, this hierarchical order was, just like in every other job, a gender based hierarchy too.

The informants were at the bottom of the pecking order; those doing studies and research came next followed by the surveillance and executive personnel. The higher we look the less women we find. Women filled narrative reports, in other words they responded to previously posited questions, after which they received another instruction from above. In most cases they had no knowledge about how the information they handled fit into a larger plan, or where the report would end up. Almost all the instructions these women received came from men, who also trained them based on previously acquired knowledge about them.²⁵ The most important element of training is impact, which has a significant role from the point of view of gender: men train women to perform certain tasks²⁶ with methods that 'objectify their thinking' in the framework of an educational plan.²⁷ There are anecdotic stories circulating about how certain liaison officers used the K-apartments (apartments for conspiracy) for casual encounters with women, and that certain liaison officers had a preference for women agents that they could approach sexually. All this proves that women as a gender were on the one hand invisible, while on the other hand it was exactly their gender that put them in undignified positions.

Information was also gathered about foreigners living and active in Hungary, such as the employees of various consulates and cultural institutions. They were mainly men, except for an employee of the American Embassy's Cultural Department, Ruth Tyron. Most probably she was placed to Budapest to act as a 'honey trap' and collect information from Soviet officers, but when she fell in love with one she was immediately recalled.²⁸ Apart from the 'honey traps', cleaning women and the Hungarian women employees of the consulates (such as typists), as well as their own compromised or bored or perhaps adventure-seeking wives could become sources of danger.

²⁵ ÁSZTL A-3860, *A hálózati személy vezetéséről* (How to handle agents) (1974), 174.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 55.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 108.

²⁸ *Összefoglaló jelentések az imperialista kémszervezetekről*. (Summary report of imperialist spying agencies) ÁSZTL 1.5. II/41. Afj7 353/7. 3. box 18.

A report dated 30 June 1966 details the situation of the Ministry of Interior's 'women network' as well as the specificities of its staff; furthermore, it also captures the complexities of the staff's composition.²⁹

70% of the 879 women working for the Ministry of Interior were agents or informants, while the rest were involved in the upkeep of the so-called T-apartments, the apartments for secret meetings. 795 women were recruited on patriotic basis; 42 joined the ranks because they were politically incriminated, and another 42 because they were morally compromised. About half of the latter 84 women were employed in county units, primarily in the field of criminal investigation.³⁰ Of the 879 women employees, 473 worked for counter espionage (296 for III/III, i.e. the Hungarian State Protection Authority's counter inside reaction division), 138 for other counter inside reaction services, 26 for the legal authorities, and 132 in the armed forces. Only 16,7% of them were already employed before 1956; while 31,8%, that is 280 women, were recruited in 1964–65.³¹

The age composition: of the 879 women, 14 were under 20, 142 between 21–30, 235 between 31–40, 259 between 41–50, 228 over 51. This age composition does not support the requirements of 'honey trapping', rather it indicates a crew of dutifully working middle aged and older women. 691 of the 879 women were not members of the Party. When it comes to education, 546 finished only elementary school, 56 had a university degree. 41% of them spoke a foreign language, 183 spoke one, 76 two, and 76 multiple languages. With such an educational attainment structure, these women's position on the labor market was quite unfavorable: 18% had a leading position, 29% worked as a clerk, and the rest of them were manual laborers. 28% of them had traveled abroad before mainly to Austria and West Germany, which is where they had connections. Only 140 of them had some interest or expertise that could have been useful from an operational point of view, such as painting, archeology, tourism, languages etc. Most women employed by the Ministry of Interior were far shots from the expectations of the 'Herrendienst', so it is no surprise that when a particular intelligence task emerged, the service was on the lookout for a woman with language skills, personal mobility, readiness for 'sexual encounters', and who is 'good-looking', 'makes a pleasant impression', or is downright 'strikingly attractive'.³² The responses to these inquiries consisted of 5–10 names long or even longer lists from the records office, even when the service sought an athletic, well-spoken man to accompany a woman who appreciates icon painting.³³

The other source of gender politics of the Hungarian secret services are the recruitment files which contain the most important personal data about the recruited, such as their characteristics, skills, connections, health status, the modus of their recruitment, their circumstances, level of preparedness, level of surveillance, usefulness etc., also contain categories such as 'ready to dye it to any color (category 17), strikingly attractive (18), plain (19), ugly (20), has a bodily defect (21), limb amputated (22), hard on hearing (23), nearsighted (24), abstinent (27), alcoholic (28), likes to drink with measure (29), homosexual (or other sexual aberrations) (30), prostitute (31), ready to be sexually

²⁹ ÁSZTL 1.II. 10/2 series 5. item. 52. box.

³⁰ ÁSZTL 1. II. 10/2 series 5. item. 52. box 3. Out of 58 recruited because of previous history in sex work.

³¹ While between 1945–1949 14 were admitted, 1950–1954 98, 1955–1956 35, in 1957 40, in 1958 71, in 1959 76.

³² ÁSZTL 1.11. 2. series. 53. box 1981–82, 1982–83, 1983–84, 54. box years of 1984, 1985, 1986.

³³ ÁSZTL 1.11. 2. series. 54. box 1983–84, 5.

involved (32), and addictions that would hinder their work as an agent (33)'.³⁴ When the service sought a person for a particular job, the agent was chosen based on these numbers. The list clearly indicates the system's heteronormativity as well as its readiness to instrumentalize sexuality. No source clarified how it was determined whether someone was a (32), but the likelihood of finding such a source is extremely low as I pointed out in the section analyzing available sources.

Analyzing training manuals during Cold War

'Gender heterogeneity', as the working relationship between men and women was termed at the intelligence services, was not addressed directly in intelligence files. This has multiple reasons. During the Cold War intelligence work was seen as a rational, plan-based, controlled process in which gender plays no role unless a woman is being deployed in the position of the sexualized 'Other'. Female identity was officially ignored, but present in practice and in informal conversations based on the most rudimentary stereotypes. The official communist ideology did not differentiate between men and women, though it ensured women's equality in the constitution. In the meantime, the everyday praxis was based on a system of values rooted in petit bourgeois morality, thus women faced discrimination both on the job market and in their families.

Women as employees obtained a more visible role either when they had a specific skill (mostly a language skill), or when they were part of a network: they were related to a man important in or for intelligence services, or if they had a job through which they had access to certain information (bartenders, secretaries or cartographers). Besides these factors, their bodily characteristics and their age was always of importance.

One of the valuable sources of analyzing gender regime of Hungarian intelligences services are the training manuals kept in ÁSZTL. In the agents' training manuals, 'communist morality' was emphasized as the one that should determine the expectations towards the handling of 'gender heterogeneity'. This above all fostered consciousness as a leading concept, as well as normativity paired with idealism, since 'communist morality' was meant to be one part of a binary dichotomy where on the other side is capitalist morality in which everything is for sale. Although 'communist morality' should have regulated the system of relations created around 'gender heterogeneity', all protocol aside, the relationships were primarily following the social praxis. In this framework any information related to sexuality was informal, yet tabooed, and at the same time instrumental.

The training of women agents was usually a task-focused ad hoc training. They had to learn to keep the given task in focus while performing the cover activities, and to pass on and receive information without being detected.

The training was different depending on the different levels of intelligence services. According to the training manual, the relationship of the recruited person and their operations officer was 'paternal', the basis of which was 'mutual trust and understanding'.³⁵ The operations' officer passed on the 'general behavioral norms, methods and tools connected to the execution of the task'.³⁶ At the same time his

³⁴Kenedi János, „Tévedtem–Utóirat a besúgottság és a besúgó közti levélváltáshoz”, *Élet és Irodalom*, 6 February 2004.

³⁵ÁSZTL A-3860, *A hálózati személy vezetéséről* (1974), 34.

‘statements have to make an impact on the reason, emotions and will of the recruited person.’³⁷ This ‘impact’ in 1977 was based on autosuggestion and Freudian teachings, as well as accessible Western literature too.

The recruitment and training of youth was a special concern, because their ‘sexual desires and the possibility of their fulfillment is different’, they are ‘more emotional’ and more susceptible to romantics.³⁸ This is why they rather recruited more mature people, whose characteristics were listed as follows: ‘the life period of level-headed, reality-based optimism, greater social ambitions, larger network, strict self-command, *manlike fortitude of will* and self-control.’³⁹ Of course we can assume that there are women with *manlike fortitude of will*, but the description unambiguously is of masculinity – a masculinity that is defined in relation to the ‘Other’, that is, woman.

‘What is the character of their social emotions, do they prefer solitude or company? In relation to their *emotionally tinted social tendencies* are they dominant, submissive or balanced? How social are they in their emotional adjustment?’⁴⁰ The intelligence services constructed its own jargon, in which love was an ‘emotionally tinted social tendency’, while another criteria of recruitment, dancing skills were: ‘the measure of efficiency when resolving emotionally directed motion based tasks; the style of movement; the economic alignment of the synchronized movements (of the hands or potentially the arms and legs)’.⁴¹

The aim of information gathering is the ‘influencing of the enemy person as necessary’,⁴² in which ‘gender heterogeneity’ – or in case of homosexuals gender-homogeneity – played an important role. By the training manual these processes should have followed ‘operative methods that comply with socialist law and does not offend the Party’s political relations with the masses’.⁴³ In praxis the technique of information acquisition was independent from political systems.

The concept of ‘controlling images’ is again useful if we want to understand how the Hungarian intelligence services handled women. The reports I read in the past years by and on female spies during communism in Hungary clearly show that the work environment – where sexuality was used as a tool – was considered to be a different space than the spy’s private family circle where she was expected to follow heteronormative *petit bourgeois* values. An interesting contradiction of gender politics of communist Hungary.⁴⁴

Based on the analysis of Hungarian training manuals for officers stationed abroad accessible at ÁSZTL, in Hungary, the systematic training of the agents’ wives had begun in the late 1970s. From these specially prepared training manuals, spy wives could not only learn about the specificities of the given country, but also how to cook in ‘Hungarian style’, i.e. which ingredients are unavailable in the given country.⁴⁵ The wives of professional intelligence agents were often employed at embassies or at the intelligence services

³⁷ ÁSZTL A-3118. Rapcsák Mihály, *Pedagógiai és pszichológiai ismeretek*. (Budapest, BM Tanulmány és Propaganda Csoportfőnökség, BM III/1, (1977), 42.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 82–83.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 85. (My emphasis P.A.)

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 100. (My emphasis P.A.)

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 105.

⁴² ÁSZTL A-3860. *A hálózatiszemélyvezetéséről*, 51.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 54.

⁴⁴ Andrea Pető, “A Missing Piece? How Women in the Communist Nomenclature are not Remembering,” *East European Politics and Society* Vol. 16. No. 3 (2003): 948–58.

where they could help with time-consuming chores such as coding. The children of intelligence officers were also sources of information as they participated in the life of the local community, through for example attending schools where they could acquire information about their classmates' parents.

The older, college age children were often targeted by enemy intelligence services. Although as wives and daughters, women often performed unpaid or part-time embassy work, and as such, they participated in data gathering, they did so in a space honored and protected by men. Within military intelligence women were not integrated in substantive tasks till as late as the 1990 s, because military training, a basic prerequisite for serving in the military intelligence, was inaccessible for them. Professional intelligence agents had to have a normative, heterosexual family life: 'Must be exemplary in his devotion and steadiness to uphold his marriage, as well as his family should be the school book example of a socialist family. Must feel responsible to maintain the socialist spirit and lifestyle in his family. Must raise his children to become valuable members of our socialist society and true campaigners of socialist ideology and society'.⁴⁶ The family members of installed agents were well aware of the profession of the family head, so in case of detection they knew exactly how to behave – like the wife of the Hungarian trade counselor of Rome, who sat in a car with her two children and was never seen afterwards.⁴⁷ Family relationships followed heteronormative expectations and thus for women the family was their primary field of agency.

As more and more women became sources of information, another change occurred. Only a few women worked in leading positions beforehand, which meant that most women targets were the secretaries of influential men. Plus, as we have already mentioned, the intelligence services attempted to recruit the women relatives of significant men – sometimes by compromising them. This is how the Stasi's Operation Romeo was conceived: the handsome East German agents used middle aged, single women working in the West primarily as secretaries for information acquisition.⁴⁸

The manual made for the counter inside reaction division thus defines what should be paid attention to: 'characteristics of the person: is he a smoker (what kind and how many cigarettes per day), amount of alcohol consumption, relationship to money, appreciation of women, passions, hobbies (sport, tourism, horse racing, fishing)'.⁴⁹ This shows that the agents were not prepared for women targets. This source is also important because it represents what elements of masculinity were considered important from the point of view of the intelligence services.

For counter insider reaction the family members of the source could also have significance, so they placed an agent by the children of the target too. In Tamás Szőnyei's seminal two-volume work on the Kádár-era literary life's state security dimensions only one woman (Katalin Imre) is mentioned as someone who was targeted by the secret police on her own right and not as the relative or romantic liaison of a targeted man.⁵⁰ No matter that socialist

⁴⁶ ÁSZTL A-3118. Rapcsák Mihály, *Pedagógiai és pszichológiai ismeretek*. (Budapest, BM Tanulmány és Propaganda Csoportfőnökség, BM III/1, 1977), 21.

⁴⁷ OSA HU-OSA 300-40-1. 11 November 1967, RFE Report.

⁴⁸ Mark Mazetti, "The Coldest Place in the Cold War," *US News and World Report*, 27. 1. 134. 3. (2003): 63.

⁴⁹ ÁSZTL A-3922, Bálint István and Gergely Attila: *A hálózati operatív játszma az ellenség megtévesztése* (Rendőrtiszt Főiskola, Budapest, 1979), 35.

⁵⁰ Szőnyei Tamás, *Titkos írás. Állambiztonsági szolgálat és irodalmi élet, 1956–1990*. I–II. (Budapest, Noran, 2012) Vol. 1. 1035–1109.

Hungary officially advocated for women's emancipation very few women were holders of valuable information which was a reflection on their limited power.

A central issue of the era was that of Soviet influence or control over Hungary. In the name of the ideology of equality the Soviet intelligence services had already trained numerous women agents between the two world wars, with which they gained a significant advantage over other intelligence services. The analyzed Hungarian training materials often includes translations from Soviet manuals, but from the 1970s on they started to sample from Western literature too, they also relied on the most current Hungarian literature, e.g. in the field of social psychology. In lack of accessible archival sources we simply cannot know in what way the recruitment practices of Soviet intelligence services, considered to be the best secret service at the time, influenced the Hungarian recruitment process. Memoires are available but they should be used with extreme care.

Conclusions

The 'Herrendienst', the secret trade of men, was built on defining itself in opposition to the 'Other.' However, this 'Other' was continuously changing and increasingly acquired space within intelligence. 'Cognitive closure' explains why it is that although the intelligence services had more and more paid women employees, this did not bring along the questioning of sexist logics underlying the expertise required for the profession. In communist Hungary officially dedicated to women's emancipation intelligence services did not make any efforts neither to promote women nor to eliminate undignifying situation of women. This article, the first survey analyzing available sources like press coverage, personal files and training manuals, and methodological challenges was the first step to acknowledge this fact.

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No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author.

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